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MILITARY EXPERIENCES.
BREECH-LOADING RIFLES IN ACTION, AND
VAST SUPERIORITY OF THE PRUSSIAN
SMALL ARM.

The great lesson to be learned by military men from the present war in Germany is the irresistible superiority of breech-loading rifles in action. The Austrian army in Bohemia was supposed to be numerically stronger than the Prussian; it contained a far larger proportion of veteran soldiers and probably of scientific officers, it was commanded by a man second in reputation to no general in Europe, it was fighting on the defensive for a cause which, as against the invaders, is a good one, and in a country of which the population is loyal to the House of Hapsburg, and yet it has gradually been driven back, with a loss estimated by the Prussians at thirty to forty thousand men, and is now said to be greatly dispirited by the series of reverses which it has sustained. It was for some time supposed that "strategic reasons" of an unexplained and mysterious nature might have induced Marshal Benedek to fall back, point by point, towards a position selected by himself for a general engagement. This supposition is no longer tenable. It is altogether incredible that such a resistance was offered by the Austrians at Skalitz, Trautman, and Munchengratz was a feat, after all, or that Gitschin was allowed to be stormed, and Prince Frederick Charles to effect a junction with the Crown Prince, in the hope of drawing the enemy to the battle-ground between Koniggratz and Josephstadt, where nothing but a decisive victory could avail Austria, and where a crushing defeat might open to the Prussians a way to Vienna. In these sanguinary conflicts the Austrian troops fought obstinately and well, but they were fairly beaten—and they were beaten, according to all the accounts that have reached us—by the more rapid fire of the Prussian infantry. From first to last it is the needle gun that has apparently carried the day, and the needle gun is simply a breech-loading rifle, of very indifferent quality. In principle, as well as in construction, it is not to be compared with several breech-loading rifles, manufactured by English makers; but, imperfect as it is, it has proved quite good enough to secure victory for the Prussians in almost every encounter. If we refer to the letter of our correspondent at the headquarters of the First Prussian army, we find ample proof of its extraordinary effect. It was this which mainly enabled the Prussians to force the passage of the bridge over the Iser at Podoll, between Turnau and Munchengratz. The Austrians had occupied the village through which the road passes towards the bridge, and commanded all the approaches from windows and barricades thrown up across the street. But the Prussian riflemen fired about three times before the Austrians, armed only with muzzle loading rifles, were able to reply. This more than compensated for any disadvantage in numbers or position, and the Austrians seem to have been completely overmatched. "In the street, the Austrian soldiers, huddled together and encumbered with clumsy ramrods, were unable to load with ease, and could return no adequate fire to that of the Prussians, while these, from the advantage of a better arm, poured their thick volleys into an almost defenceless crowd." It was the same at the railway bridge, about two hundred yards distant, where a like struggle was going on simultaneously. "Aero too," says our correspondent, "the needle gun showed its advantage over the old fashioned weapons of the Austrians, for the latter fell in the proportion of six to one Prussian." At last the former retreated, leaving most, if not all, of their killed and wounded on the field; and it was found that not only was the number of Austrian dead much greater, but that in the hospitals "the proportion of wounded Austrians to wounded Prussians was as five to one."

These are startling results, and yet they are no more than any one untroubled by military prejudices would have anticipated. There may be still more lingering doubts among old hands as to whether a breech-loading rifle is a "hard" or "soft" weapon, but quite as far as a muzzle-loader, the better opinion is that it held straight it is fully equal to its awkward rival in this respect, while no one ever ventured to doubt that it does much greater execution. Now, a battle strongly resembles a battle, with this difference, that coolness and self-possession are far rarer and of far more importance. If sportsmen are often hurried by the difficulty of loading

fast enough while birds are getting up on all sides, how can young soldiers be expected to keep their heads clear and their hands steady in the process of ramming down while they are themselves under fire? From this point of view, another remark made by our correspondent with the Prussian army deserves serious consideration. It is not only in rapidity of discharge and in safety of loading that breech loading rifles surpass muzzle-loaders, but also in the average direction of aim. "A man with a musket on the nipple of which he has to place a cap naturally raises the muzzle in the air, and in the hurry and excitement of action often forgets to lower it, and only ends his bullet over the heads of the opposite ranks, while the soldier armed with a breech loading musket keeps his muzzle down, and if in haste he fires it off without raising the butt to his shoulder his shot still takes effect, though often low; and a proof of this is that very many of the Austrian prisoners are wounded in the legs." The only objection, indeed, which is urged against the breech-loading system for weapons to be used in war is one that answers itself. It is said that regiments would fire away their ammunition so fast that it would be impossible to keep them supplied. This is as much as to say that soldiers must be exposed to the certainty of being mown down by enemies firing three shots to their one because ammunition might otherwise be wasted, and the means of transport must be increased. It might be sufficient to reply that in the Prussian army these obstacles are not found insuperable, but where common sense is decisive of a question it seems needless to invoke experience.

Without experience, however, no reform involving considerable expense is likely to find favor with heads of departments in this country. It is on this ground that we have invited attention to the experiments which have lately been tried on the largest scale in real warfare, and we now most earnestly represent the urgent necessity of profiting by them. It was but last month that Marshal Benedek encouraged his troops to despise the alleged superiority of Prussian firearms, and to rely on the bayonet, and we already see the consequences. Every one knows that bayonets are seldom actually crossed; when they are crossed it is by no means follows that those who carry the worst rifles will give the most vigorous thrust, and before they are crossed it is certain that rapidity of fire will tell fatally. With these facts before us not a day should be lost in arming our own infantry with breech-loaders of the best available pattern. There is no official in the War Department who would himself think of using a muzzle loader in cover shooting if he had the option of a breech-loader, or who would like to confront with the former an enemy provided with the latter. Then why delay to place the better weapon in the hands of our army? The smaller the force we maintain as compared with our neighbors, and the greater the difficulty we experience in recruiting is, the more essential it is that we should forthwith appropriate an improvement which multiplies its effective strength, and makes one man, under certain circumstances, a match for two or three. Whether the single breech-loader, or some repeating rifle, like that of Spencer, adopted in the United States, would on the whole be more serviceable, is a matter to be discussed by professional connoisseurs. Spencer's rifle is a "seven shooter," and all seven charges are put in at once into a chamber in the stock, but as the breech must be opened after each shot to get rid of the empty cartridge it is possible that very little time is gained and some risk of derangement incurred by this additional complication. Such points may safely be left to the judgment of scientific officers, but the expediency of substituting breech-loaders for muzzle loaders is another affair. Scientific officers will never succeed, by themselves, in forcing the change upon the authorities, and the only power capable of doing so is the power of public opinion.

ONIONS OF DISEASE.—The odor of small pox has been compared to the smell of a hog; that of measles to a fresh plucked goose; variolæ to cheese. The smell of plague has been compared with the odor of May-flowers, and that of typhus with a Cossack. That the typhus ammonia has often been observed, and the best and most recent investigators agree that it is a compound of ammonia. Probably the more intense the smell the more operative the poison; hence the necessity, on the part of attendants to avoid inhaling this concentrated poison.

HORRORS OF POINT LOOKOUT AND ELMIRA.

We have been anxious, says the Charleston (V.) Chronicle, to see from some competent hand an account of the manner in which our Confederate soldiers fared as prisoners of war, and we are, therefore, happy to announce that Mr. M. A. Kelley, of the Petersburg Index, has published in a small and very readable volume, his experience of a protracted confinement at Point Lookout and Elmira. There is so much said about Andersonville and Salisbury, that it is well to know how these things were managed by the parties whose virtuous indignation has been so much aroused against Captain Wirz and Major Gen.

It is proper, however, to bear in mind that the opportunities for providing some tolerable degree of comfort to those held as prisoners of war were very different at the North from what they were at the South. For the last two years of the war the population of the Southern Confederacy were not only deprived of the luxuries of life, but it was really a struggle to procure food of the plainest kind. Most persons consumed no tea, coffee or sugar; many lived without meat. Clothing was of the rudest material, and the wardrobes of the wealthiest exceeding scanty. By rigid blockade the Federal ships and troops rendered it difficult to procure medicines, which, if obtained, were sold at fabulous prices.

It is well known also that our armies subsisted on the scantiest rations and that frequently they were almost in a starving condition.

At the North there was everything in abundance—corn, wheat, pork, beef, vegetables, woolen and cotton fabrics, medicines, wines, fruits, tea, coffee, &c.

Notwithstanding this, at the prisons of Point Lookout and Elmira, where thousands of prisoners were confined, our men were always hungry, and in the winter were never protected from the cold.

Mr. Kelly gives the following as the bill of fare at Point Lookout: For breakfast, four or five ounces of meat (pork or beef) and a slice of bread and "rather over half a pint of watery slop by courtesy called soup." This was all a man got to eat in twenty-four hours.

At Elmira the ration of bread was a pound per day. The meat rations on the other hand was invariably scanty. "It sometimes happened that the same man got bones only for several successive days." Rats were eaten in numbers. "I had seen," says our author, "a mob of hungry 'Rebs' besiege the bone cart, and beg from the driver fragments on which an August sun had been burning for several days."

At Point Lookout the water was so impregnated with some mineral as to offend every nose, and induce diarrhoea in almost every case. It colors everything black in which it is allowed to rest, and a scum rises on the top of a vessel if it is left standing during the night, which reflects the prismatic colors as distinctly as the surface of a stagnant pool. There are "wells" outside the prison pen from which the Federals supplied themselves with good water.

Speaking of this same prison, the writer says: "During the scorching summer, whose severity during the day is as great on that sand barren as anywhere in the Union north of the Gulf, and through the hard winter, which is more severe at that point than anywhere in the country south of Boston, these poor fellows were confined here in open tents on the naked ground, without plank, or a handful of straw between them and the heat or the frost of the earth. And when, in the winter, a high tide or an easterly gale would flood the pen, and freeze as it flooded, the sufferings of the half clad wretches may be easily imagined. Many died outright, etc. Even the well-dressed sentinels, although relieved every thirty minutes instead of every two hours, as is the army rule, perished, in some instances, and others lost the feet and hands through the terrible cold of the season."

"During all this season the ration of wood allowed to each man was an armful for five days, and this had to cook for him as well as for warm him."

This was not all. Only one blanket was allowed to each man. There were regular inspections, and every extra blanket was seized.

You could receive nothing in the way of clothing without giving up the corresponding article which you might chance to possess. All money was also taken away. Every third day there were negro sentinels on duty, whose insolence and brutality were intolerable. If a prisoner crossed the dead line, their warning was the click of the lock, sometimes the discharge of the musket.

The shelter at Point Lookout was at the rate one 'A' tent, covering about six feet square—to each squad of five; or one Sibley tent—diameter fifteen feet—to every eighteen men.

The author was transferred from Point Lookout to Elmira, where a number of the officers in command were civil and kind, and a number of them were brutes and villains. One Captain Bowden, at this prison, had before him, on one occasion, a prisoner named Hale (of the old Stonewall brigade) for drunkenness, and he sought to know where he got his liquor. Hale refused to tell, as it would compromise others. He was accordingly tied up by the thumbs, suffering exquisite torture, but he refused to peach, and called on his fellow prisoners to remember this when they got home.—Bowden grew exasperated, and attempted to gag him by fastening a heavy oak tent-pin in his mouth sufficiently—a difficult operation. He struck him in the face with the oaken billet, a blow which broke several of his teeth and covered his mouth with blood!

At Elmira the most scandalous neglect existed in the hospitals in the matter of providing the patients with proper food. "I do not doubt that many of them perished from actual starvation."

There was also an inexcusable deficiency in medicine. Several weeks, in which dysentery and inflammation of the bowels prevailed, there was not a grain of any preparation of opium in the dispensary, and many a poor fellow died for the want of this medicine. The doctors were also extremely ignorant. The mortality which took place exceeded even the reported mortality at Andersonville.

At Andersonville, out of a population of 36,000, 6,000, or one-sixth of all, died, from February 1, 1864, to August 1, 1864. At Elmira, the quota was not made up till the last of August, so that September was the first month during which any fair estimate of the mortality could be made. Now, out of less than 9,500 persons on the first of September, 366 died that month. At Andersonville, it was one thirty-sixth of the whole per month; at Elmira, it was one twenty-fifth. At first it was less than three per cent. per month; at the latter it was four per cent. per month.

Our article is already extended. We commend Mr. Kelley's book—it is called "In Vinculi; or, the Prisoner of War"—to our readers as the production of an intelligent, well informed and truthful writer.

DANGER TO THE PARTY.—The National Republican, of Tuesday, has the following remarks upon the Philadelphia Convention, which we commend to the attention of those who are fearful that the Democratic party will be swallowed up by the Republicans:

"The tenderness with which some of our radical friends express their fears that the members of the Union party will go into the Philadelphia Convention 'will be swallowed up by the copperheads and Southern rebels, is at times quite overcoming to us. We shudder at the idea, and our mixed reveries to the sad fate of Jonah. Then we turn to the Democratic papers, and we find consolation in the fact that some of them express the same fear about their brethren, namely that they will be swallowed up by the National Union party, members of which initiated and called the Philadelphia Convention. With fear and trembling, we have looked about to ascertain who will be the whale and who will be Jonah. We don't think a cathartic would damage either the Union or Democratic party just at this time. It matters very little which party at Philadelphia is the whale or which is Jonah. After the secession of Jonah, we have no journalistic accounts of the movements of the whale. Whether it died, or swallowed another man or a whole convention, or was swallowed, is not stated."

The Republican then rehearses the history of various coalitions which succeeded in defeating the old parties, and concludes thus:

"There are as good fish in the sea as were ever caught. We are now willing to make another coalition for these high, national purposes, if necessary. And to that end we welcome men to the Philadelphia Convention from every State in the Union who can endorse the principles of the call. As there is a just God, the right will triumph at Philadelphia."

THE GERMAN'S FATHERLAND.

Where is the German's Fatherland? Is't Prussia? Swabia? Is't the strand Where grows the vine, where flows the Rhine? Is't where the gull skims Baltic's brine? No!—yet more great and far more grand Must be the German's Fatherland!

How call they then the German's land? Bavaria! Brunswick! Hast thou scanned It where the Zuyder Zee extends? Where Styrian toil the iron bends? No, brother, no!—thou hast not spanned The German's genuine Fatherland!

Is then the German's Fatherland Westphalia? Pomerania! Stand Where Zurich's waveless water sleeps: Where Weiser winds, where Danube sweeps: Hast found it now?—Not yet! Demand Elsewhere the German's Fatherland!

Then say, Where lies the German's land? How call they that unconquered land? Is't where Tyrol's green mountains rise? The Switzer's land I dearly prize, By Freedom's purest breeze fanned— But no! 'tis not the German's land!

Where, therefore, lies the German's land? Baptize that great, that ancient land! Is't surely Austria, proud and bold, In wealth unmatched, in glory old? O! none shall write her name on sand; But she is not the German's land!

Say then, Where lies the German's land? Baptize that great, that ancient land! Is't Alsace! Or Lorraine—that gem Wrenched from the Imperial Diadem By wiles which princely treachery planned? Not these are not the German's land!

Where, therefore, lies the German's land? Name thou at last that mighty land! Where'er resounds the German tongue— Where German hymns to God are sung— There, gallant brother, take thy stand! That is the German's Fatherland!

That is his land, the land of lands, Where vows bind less than clasped hands, Where Valor lights the flashing eye, Where Love and Truth in deep hearts lie, And Love enkindles Freedom's brand— That is the German's Fatherland!

That is the German's Fatherland Where Fate pursues each foreign band— Where German is the name for friend, Where Frenchman is the name for fiend, And France's yoke is spurned and banned— That is the German's Fatherland!

That is the German's Fatherland! Great God! look down and bless that land! And give her noble children souls To cherish noble Existence rolls, And love with heart, and aid with hand, Their Universal Fatherland!

FORREST'S OWN ACCOUNT OF THE PURSUIT CAPTURE OF STREIGHT.

Late one afternoon, long after this, at the moment when the entire Confederacy was ringing with his pursuit and capture of Col. Straight, Forrest came into the editorial room of the Rebel at Chattanooga, where three or four of his old friends were collected, and gave us a minute narrative of the recent campaign. His descriptive powers are naturally very good and on this occasion he was full of this story, and spoke with the enthusiasm and simplicity of a child. He had pursued Straight's column, fighting every day, for nearly a fortnight, over an almost barren country for over seven hundred miles and with an inferior force, capturing him at last by stratagem. "I wasn't certain when I demanded his surrender, which would have to give in, him or me. But it was like a game of poker, I called him on a single 'pair' to his 'full,' trusting to luck. He seemed, at first, to have very little confidence in my hand; but I said: 'I give you five minutes. I've followed you and fought you for two weeks, and now I've got you just where I want you. I'm tired of sacrificing lives, and offer you a chance to stop it. If you don't I warn you I won't be answerable for the consequences.'"

Streight was fairly bluffed. He was in a strange country. His adversary was known to be a desperate man. His command was jaded. What could he do? If he stood out any longer and was mistaken, he might be sacrificed. He surrendered, and in a few minutes himself and his men were disarmed prisoners under the escort of one-fourth of their number. "Where is the rest of your command General?" asked Col. Straight. Forrest smiled grimly, and made no reply. Presently when they arrived in the village of Rome, the mystery was removed, and the gallant but outwitted Indian saw his blunder.

It was during the pursuit of Straight, that an incident occurred which Forrest reported with great satisfaction. The chase was becoming excited and the Confederates were beginning to be eager for its conclusion when they reached a stream over which the enemy had crossed in safety, but which had risen so rapidly as to be impassable. Forrest rode along the banks baffled and angry, while the bullets from the other side spun through the trees and whistled

about his ears. After vainly seeking for half an hour, he came to a cabin which stood alone in the wilderness near the water's edge. Here, as a last resort he inquired for a ford. A young girl ran out and said, "I can show you one if you take me up behind you." The mother was very much shocked, but the girl continued, "I'm not afraid. You're General Forrest, and will take care of me." "Hop up, then," said Forrest, riding close to the fence. "The girl bounded upon the horse, clung tightly to the General's saddle, and away they rode, down the stream and sharp shooting and the whizzing of minnies. 'What's that?' said the girl innocently, as one of these came very near. 'That,' said Forrest, is a skered bird. They reached the ford in safety, the command passed over, and the General turned to his gallant little guide and asked what he could do for her? She replied that her brother had been captured by Colonel Straight and was a prisoner in his hands; all she desired was his release. 'Very well,' said Forrest, taking a note of the name, 'you shall have him by twelve o'clock to-morrow.'"

It was turned of eleven the next day when Straight surrendered. Immediately General Forrest called for John Sansom, who promptly appeared, glad enough to be relieved, and wondering what could be wanted with him by his own General. "I promised your sister Emma," said Forrest, when the young man appeared, "to send you to her at twelve o'clock to-day. Time's nearly up. Take the best horse you can find and put out. Double-quick now—march!" As related by Forrest himself, in that quiet little editorial room at the close of a summer day, with all its freshness about it, the story was thrilling, and we at once resolved to make a heroine out of the little rustic, Emma Sansom. Subsequently she received a grant of land and a vote of thanks from the General Assembly of Alabama; but the remembrance of that ride behind the most daring cavalry leader of the American continent should be worth more to her than all the grants and resolutions which Legislatures have power to give. I know that Forrest looks back upon it with pride that exceeds the sense of the victory which it secured, and never alludes to it without a touch of the old fire and a quick returning of the old flash.—Correspondence of the Nashville Banner.

Recently in a town not a thousand miles from Columbus, a young man who loved wisely and well, proposed, was accepted, and proceeded to procure the marriage license from the proper official in the country town. He was a little sensitive on the point of publicity, and left home for a horseback ride to said county seat, dressed apparently in his old every-day clothes. Under these, however, he wore his "Sunday-go-to-meetin'" and on nearing the point of destination, hitched his horse, laid off his old clothes, and tripped lightly over the bridge into town, a very dandy in untroubled smoothness. It so happened that he shed his clothes and tied his horse near a stream of considerable depth. Men discovered both, and soon concluded that some reckless young man had been drowned. The subject was thoroughly canvassed, and preparations made to drag the steamer for the body. A large crowd had collected, by this time, and the excitement was intense. The proceedings were stopped by an excited individual plunging across the bridge, springing on the horse, and galloping away. The inference at once was that the young man had stolen the horse and several farmers started immediately in pursuit. Young man saw them and whipped up to full speed. The race was a close one for several miles, when he dodged them by taking a bypath through the woods. He was again discovered, however, and again the chase by many new comers with fresh horses. Fell-mell, rough and tumble, the pursued and pursuers went through the country for many miles creating everywhere excitement. At last the young man neared the residence of his intended bride. He rode at once to the gate, dismounted, and plunged into the house, as the pursuing party dashed up, he declaring that they "couldn't" have his horse without riding hard for them," and that he wouldn't give them up without a fuss. Explanation succeeded explanation, and there was a hearty laugh at the expense of the unopprobriated youth who had been pursued as a horse thief, but who only labored under the misapprehension that his pursuers wanted to rob him of his marriage license.—Ohio State Journal.